

RECENT FRENCH BOOKS.

HOME NEW EDITIONS.

ADVENTURES PRODIGIEUSES DE TARTARIN DE TARASCON. PAR ALPHONSE DAUDET. Paris: E. Dentu.

NEW-YORK: W. R. Jenkins.

LA BELLE NIVERNAISE. PAR ALPHONSE DAUDET. Paris: C. Marpon et E. Flammarion. NEW-YORK: W. R. Jenkins.

PRINCESSE. PAR LUDOVIC HALLEY. Paris: Calmann Levy.

NOIR ET ROSE. GEORGES OUEST. Paris: Paul Ollendorff.

LA FRANCE JUIVE DEVANT L'OPINION. PAR EDOUARD DUROUET. PARIS: C. MARPON ET E. FLAMMARION. NEW-YORK: W. R. Jenkins.

AUTOUR DU CONCLE SOUVENIRS ET CHRONIQUES D'UN ARTISTE A ROME. PAR CHARLES YRIARTE. PARIS: J. Rothchild.

The great success of the beautifully illustrated edition of Daudet's "Tartarin sur les Alpes" a year ago naturally led to the preparation of an illustrated edition of the finished humorous masterpiece, "Tartarin de Tarascon," and the house of Dentu was intrusted with the undertaking. "Tartarin" is already a classic, but one cannot but feel grateful to the publisher who furnishes an excuse for reading once more so delightful a production. No writer has ever described the southern French man better than Alphonse Daudet. He knows the type thoroughly, and he revels in the extravagance which the hot sun of the region seems to develop so prodigiously. Tartarin of Tarascon, however, is the flower of the race, and in his character, doings and surroundings there is so delicate a mixture of realism and burlesque, so fine and genial a humor, so bright yet remorseless a satire, that the good citizens of Tarascon themselves, could the town be materialized, would not fall out with the author. As for Tartarin, he is an immortal; or rather both the Tartarins are immortal—the one who years for thrilling adventures and the one who much prefers a life of ease and security amid the innocent pleasures and tranquil occupations of Tarascon. The story of how Tartarin of Tarascon acquired the reputation and honorary title of the Lion Slayer is of course familiar to all the reading world long since, but until now the honors which enterprising publishers are so glad to offer far less enterprising books have somehow been withheld from this. Last Christmas, however, the omission was repaired by the issue of this handsome and profusely illustrated volume. It must indeed be admitted that it suffers by comparison with the exceptionally beautiful edition of "Tartarin sur les Alpes" as regards the illustrations. If the latter had not existed perhaps the new illustrations would have been thought quite satisfactory. Many of them indeed are very good and expressive, and for an edition intended to be popular they may suffice. The hearty lovers of Tartarin, however, will not be satisfied until he has been furnished a dress and decoration for his earlier adventures in all respects equal to those with which the now famous "Flâneur" edition honored his Alpine journey.

Messrs. Marpon & Flammarion have published another of Daudet's earlier stories, "La Belle Nivernaise," in a luxuriant form, imperial octavo with broad margins, heavy paper, large clear type and a large number of illustrations, many of which, including nearly all the full-page glypticographs, are excellent in their way. "La Belle Nivernaise" is a charming story. It is the history of a poor family who live upon a barge engaged in the wood transportation. The rough but warm-hearted father and skipper picks up a deserted child, a little boy, and takes him home to his barge cabin, though he knows that his wife, having plenty of children of her own, will scold him terribly. This happens, but after all the maternal heart of the captain's wife is not prod against the helplessness of the little stranger, and she ends by adopting him. The fortunes of the family on the barge, the tender little love affair which develops between the foundling and the daughter of the barge captain, the discovery of the boy's parentage and the results of that discovery are all told in Daudet's best manner. The volume contains in addition to this pretty story five short ones, three of them being versions of those Provencal legends of which this author is so fond and which he recounts so agreeably. The last is a mere sketch called "The New Master," and appears either never to have been finished or to have been finished very hastily. It was hardly worth while to have preserved it, in fact. "Juvé chez le Bon Dieu" is the best, being the account of how a cat-dealing, wine-drinking fellow begged St. Peter into giving him temporary admission into Paradise; how beside he refused utterly to depart, and by what ruse he was finally got rid off. The legend of the "Three Low Masses" has a decidedly mediæval flavor. It is a Christmas story, and no doubt there are still home circles where its recital at that season would cause pleasant shiverings to run down the backs of the listeners as they crept closer to the great open fire-place.

There are four stories in M. Halevy's new volume, viz.: "Princesse, Un Grand Mariage, Les Trois Coups de Foudre et Mon Canard à Mis-sard." The first named is new. It is cast in that most difficult of forms, the epistolary, and it is not very interesting, the story of a young girl who inherits or has acquired horribly sordid and mundane views; who chatters eternally about the pleasures of "the world"; who fails to appreciate a very good father and mother; who conspires with a scamp of a brother to effect a rich marriage for herself, and who finally succeeds. Her father is a manufacturer who has amassed a large fortune but continues to live in a thoroughly bourgeois manner, which of course disgusts and exasperates his children, who after the fashion of their generation are far too refined to be willing to exist in the plain way of their parents. In short, "Princesse" is not a pleasant story and its conclusion seems rather intended to intimate that the heartless, soulless lust of luxury and dissipation which this typical example of a class of worthless modern girls is given over to is something respectable and deserving of pursuit, which is bad philosophy and worse ethics. "A Grand Marriage" is much in the same style and therefore open to the same objections. The best story in the volume is not a new one. "The Three Thunderbolts" is one of M. Halevy's best and most brilliant tales. It is dainty, sparkling, full of quaint conceits and bright dramatic little situations. M. Conquet has done well to put the "Trois Coups de Foudre" into his library of livres d'amateurs; those exquisitely printed and illustrated volumes which constitute the very highest expression of modern art in book-making. "My Friend Mussard" is an amusing sketch, but rather thin. Among the hitherto unpublished pieces it must be said that there is really nothing to increase or even to sustain the reputation of the author.

In "Noir et Rose" M. Georges Ohnet has brought together two stories having no connection, but of which the first is sombre and the second gay. The "Noir" is a tale of love and art. A Hungarian violinist who has won European fame—the greatest artist of his day, in fact—falls in love with a beautiful English (or rather Irish) "mæss." As usual with French writers, the most amazing liberties are taken with Anglican things, names, customs. The father of the girl is an Irish marquis—though that is a trifle. She is called Miss, though her father is a peer. They occupy a splendid chateau buried in an immense park situated "at the gates of Dublin"; and the name of the Irish marquis is Melville, which as any one can perceive is a thoroughly Hibernian patronymic. These stumbling blocks once overcome, however, the story runs smoothly along. Steno Marakay, the artist, asks Lord Melville for his daughter's hand and is contemptuously refused. Then Maud elopes with Steno, and the father disowns her. After a glorious career of artistic triumphs, in which his wife shares the promising career of the artist is interrupted by the illness of Maud, who cannot be comforted because of her father's anger against her. The rest is a sort of French nightmare of the most gloomy and sentimental sort, and when finally Steno, his wife having died, has himself rowed out to sea in a boat, plays his favorite "Swan Song" with amazing verve, and then plunges overboard, it is impossible not to experience a certain relief that all events an end of that lugubrious if artistic scene has been effected. The second story,

"Aunt Ursula's Misfortune," is a very different performance. The heroine is a lady of uncertain age who has lived a generation or so on the strength of a youthful sorrow. In her teens she loved a wild and worthless cousin whom she would have married but that her father put his veto on the match. This cousin, having squandered everything, enlisted, hoping that he would be bought off. But just then the Crimean war broke out, and he was compelled to go away with his regiment. Presently he was reported "missing" and everybody concluded that he was dead. Aunt Ursula at once declared that she would never marry, devoted herself thereafter to nursing her sorrows, established a shrine in her room with a photograph of her cousin as the object of worship, and bound herself to an implacable hatred of the army as the cause of all her woes. In the course of time her niece, a pretty girl, falls in love with an officer, and when Aunt Ursula finds it out there is trouble. All sorts of obstacles to the love affair arise, and a family quarrel is on the point of breaking out when suddenly the long-mourned cousin of Aunt Ursula reappears. He is a fat, coarse, middle-aged man. He had it seemed deserted after having been made prisoner by the Russians, and had married a young woman who nursed him. He has quite forgotten the old tenderness, and unconsciously tells his adventures to the shuddering and almost lifeless old maid who sees the whole illusion of her life shattered, and nothing left but the crude disappointment. Naturally, however, a revelation takes place in her feelings, and after driving her recreant and traitorous lover from her sight she recants all her opposition to the military and gives her assent to the marriage of her niece. This story is amusing in itself and it is excellently told. The character of Aunt Ursula is full of art, and the denouement is capital.

In "La France Juive devant l'Opinion" M. Dumont continues his attack upon the Semitic race with undiminished energy, defending himself against all the criticisms his sensational work called out, expressing his opinions upon the various revenges attempted upon him by the French public for his bold exposure of last year. It is perhaps unnecessary to say that the extravagance and bitterness which in the judgment of impartial readers disfigured and weakened "La France Juive" are to be found in the later volume. To such lengths is he carried by his antipathies or by the desire to strengthen his case that he gravely defends the persecution of the Jews by the Spanish Inquisition, and as gravely observes that the Spanish Jews were never pursued by the Holy Office on account of their religion. When a writer gets as far as that it ceases to be worth while to follow him, unless he has ample leisure and is particularly fond of paradoxes. M. Dumont is evidently determined to work out the new vein he has struck completely, however, for he has already in press a new work to be called "L'Europe Juive." He puts a sting in the conclusion of "La France Juive devant l'Opinion" by intimating that the German Jews are doing their best to bring on a war against France, for the purpose of revenging their co-religionists in the latter country. That is a kind of blow below the belt, to be delivered as so nervous and critical a period as the present.

M. Charles Yriarte was in Rome when the last Papal Council was held, and in this handsome volume he records his impressions of the Eternal City, and especially of the ecclesiastical manners and customs which he observed at the time. Most of his observations were on the outside, but they are shrewd, suggestive and often amusing, and some of his gossip about the little world of the Vatican has the interest of novelty, though the reader may not always feel quite sure as to the trustworthiness of the authority. The book is well and abundantly illustrated, having four very good etchings after Heilmuth, and ninety engravings in the text by Detaille, Godfrey-Durand, Lix, Bocourt de Liphart, the author, and Wallot. Portraits of many of the church dignitaries who attended the Council lend additional value to the work.

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"Constance of Acadia" found many warm admirers, but this (Acadia), the second volume of the Old Colony Series, is a far inferior. It has all the romantic charm of the Academic romance, and is put together with greater skill and wit than the first volume, but it is not a new one. "The Three Thunderbolts" is one of M. Halevy's best and most brilliant tales. It is dainty, sparkling, full of quaint conceits and bright dramatic little situations. M. Conquet has done well to put the "Trois Coups de Foudre" into his library of livres d'amateurs; those exquisitely printed and illustrated volumes which constitute the very highest expression of modern art in book-making. "My Friend Mussard" is an amusing sketch, but rather thin. Among the hitherto unpublished pieces it must be said that there is really nothing to increase or even to sustain the reputation of the author.

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